



**ZION-BENTON TWP. HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT 126**  
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December 1, 2014

Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Sir/Madame,

I am writing today in response to FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler's recently announced proposal to raise the E-Rate funding cap by \$1.5 billion. The E-Rate program is critical in providing discounts to assist school districts (like mine) to obtain affordable telecommunications and internet access. As Superintendent of Zion-Benton Twp. High School District 126 in Zion, Illinois, I strongly support the infusion of the additional funding, and urge you to do the same.

We are a school district that serves ~2,750 students in a suburban setting. Approximately 58% of our very diverse population of students qualify for free/reduced lunch. E-rate is a critical revenue for our school district as we seek to further students' access to technology resources to improve teaching and learning experiences. Indeed, access to these resources is a great equalizer in providing quality educational experiences in our public schools. We have used our district resources to build our technology infrastructure, but the ability to increase telecommunication and internet access is a continual concern as demand increases, particularly with Illinois' recent move to requiring state assessments be administered online.

To raise the cap of the E-Rate program by \$1.5 billion, the Universal Service Fund fee will increase by 16 cents per month per account. 16 additional cents per month—less than half a penny per day—totals to an additional \$1.92 per year, approximately the cost of a cup of coffee. This proposal is both reasonable and justified, asking contributors to forgo one cup of coffee over the course of a year to ensure that our nation's schools and libraries are connected to the internet in a way that supports 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and prepares them for post-secondary opportunity.

No one questions that it is time to ensure that our libraries and schools are connected with the quality of connectivity that is sufficient and scalable for today's ever-growing connectivity needs. In less than twenty years since Congress established the program, E-Rate played a critical role in transforming levels of connectivity from less than one-quarter of schools and libraries to nearly all connected today. The E-Rate program's work is not done: Achieving the laudable broadband goals adopted by the Commission in July will require additional investment. The biggest obstacle the E-Rate program faces, even with the recent changes, remains the strain of increasing demand for E-Rate-supported services and persistently low funding.

The single most effective step the FCC can take to bolster E-Rate's current and future success is to ensure that the program's funding is adequate to support, in a sustainable manner, the program's changes and goals as adopted in July. Chairman Wheeler's proposal does just that, representing a deliberate effort to expand educational opportunities for our nation's students. By focusing on high-capacity broadband connections to the internet

(particularly those in rural communities) and providing sustained, additional funding to the E-Rate program, the modernized E-Rate will ensure the nation's schools—including mine—are able to keep pace with ever increasing connectivity needs.

Thank you for considering my response as you move forward with your decision on the E-Rate program and its funding. I applaud Chairman Wheeler and the FCC for its continued efforts to protect the already oversubscribed E-Rate program by ensuring the future of this successful program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Clark", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Chris M. Clark, Ed.D.  
Superintendent